

REMARKS

Please reconsider the application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks. Applicant thanks the Examiner for carefully considering this application.

Disposition of Claims

Claims 12-22 were pending in this application. Claims 13-14 and 22 have been cancelled by this reply. New claims 24-33 have been added by this reply. Claims 12, 15-21, and 24-33 are now pending. Claims 12 and 25 are independent. The remaining claims depend, directly or indirectly, from claims 12 and 25.

Claim Amendments

Independent claim 12 has been amended to clarify the scope of the invention. Support for the amendments to claim 12 may be found, for example, in paragraphs [0020], [0032], and [0034] of the application. Dependent claims 15-20 have been amended to clarify the scope of the invention. Support for the amendments to claims 15-20 may be found, for example, in paragraphs [0027] – [0029] of the application. No new matter has been added by any of the aforementioned amendments.

New claims

New claims 24-33 have been added by this reply. Support for new claims 24-33 may be found, for example, in paragraphs [0020], [0024], [0027] - [0029], [0031] - [0034] of the application. No new matter has been added by the new claims.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 12-18, 20, 22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0029375 (“Mlynarczyk”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,141,792 (“Acker”). Mlynarczyk is not valid prior art to this application as evidenced by the attached revised declaration under 37 C.F.R. §1.131. As stated in the declaration, the present invention was conceived prior to the effective date of Mlynarczyk (*i.e.*, prior to June 26, 2001), and constructively reduced to practice with due diligence exercised by the inventors. In view of the above, Mlynarczyk may not be used to support the aforementioned 35 U.S.C. § 103 rejection. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 19 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Mlynarczyk and Acker in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,853,843 (“Ecklund”). To the extent that this rejection applies to the amended claims, the rejection is respectfully traversed. As discussed above, Mlynarczyk may not be used to support the aforementioned 35 U.S.C. § 103 rejection. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 21 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Mlynarczyk and Acker and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,125,400 (“Cohen”). To the extent that this rejection applies to the amended claims, the rejection is respectfully traversed. As discussed above, Mlynarczyk may not be used to support the aforementioned 35 U.S.C. § 103 rejection. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

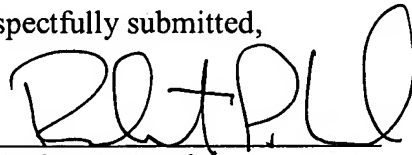
Conclusion

Applicant believes this reply is fully responsive to all outstanding issues and places this application in condition for allowance. If this belief is incorrect, or other issues arise, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned or his associates at the telephone number listed below. Please apply any charges not covered, or any credits, to Deposit Account 50-0591 (Reference Number 16159/020001).

Dated: June 2, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

By

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "RPL", written over a horizontal line.

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